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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of a study of family role structures and family role interaction patterns of U.S. television families appearing during prime time and Saturday morning programs for the 1976-1977 season. The content analysis constitutes a role-by-behavior description of verbal interaction among television families, the coding unit being any act or sequence of acts initiated by a family member and directed to another family member which is unitary with respect to direction, mode, and recipient. Each act was assigned to one of several nominal level categories along such dimensions as the act initiator, directions and modes (going toward, away, or against), the act recipient, and the family structure. Coder training procedures and interrater reliability percentages are described. Discussion of findings is supported by tables displaying the data collected, and a 52-item bibliography is provided. Appendices include a list of the programs studied and a table of family interactions for these programs. (RAO)

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An Analysis of Family Role Structures and Interactions In Commercial Television

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Report No. 6

An Analysis of Family Role Structures and Interactions In Commercial Television

The basic organizing unit in American society and a common element in many television programs is the family. It may be a nuclear family consisting of two parents and some children; it may be a family in which one of the parents is divorced; or it may be a more extended family which includes a grandparent or even more distant relatives. In any case, such families flourish in real life and on television.

For almost all children, their first experiences with families are with their own and with those of their playmates. Yet, at a pre-school age, the same child begins to vicariously experience and observe the families that are available on television, both in prime-time evening shows and in those afternoon periods when local stations will buy syndicated comedies (e.g., "Brady Bunch," "Partridge Family," "Father Knows Best," "My Three Sons") and put them into a local time period that draws heavy viewing from impressionable young people. What does a young viewer begin to extract from observing the families on television, their composition, and their interactions with each other?

The same social learning theories which have led to testable propositions regarding the learning of aggression from television (Baker and Ball, 1969; Berkowitz, 1962; Goranson, 1969; Liebert, Davidson and Neale, 1973; Maccoby, 1964; Atkin, Murray and Nayman, 1972), the learning of pro-social behaviors (Friedrich and Stein, 1973; Leifer, Gordon and Graves, 1974; Paulson, McDonald and Whittemore, 1972), and the learning of sex-role expectations (Atkin and Miller, 1975; Miller and Reeves, 1975) would also be applicable to the learning of family roles, attitudes and behaviors. The central propositions from which we proceed are that (1) children can and do learn behaviors through the observation of models who

perform such behaviors, without direct reinforcement; and (2) children try to maximize benefits to themselves, usually in the form of reinforcement for imitating or identifying with a model (Aronfreed, 1969; Bandura, 1969; Bandura and Walters, 1963; Miller and Dallard, 1941; Mowrer, 1950; Sears, 1957).

Family role structures and role interaction patterns on television constitute an important and presumable abundant class of environmental stimuli available for attitudinal formation and change and for behavioral modeling by the child. Observations of family role interaction patterns may lead directly to imitation of behaviors displayed by television models or to behavioral change mediated by attitude change. Learning, of course, would depend in part on the developmental level of the child (Collins, 1975; Greenberg, 1974; Katzman, 1971; Leifer, Collins, Gross, Taylor, Andrews and Blackmer, 1971; Reeves, 1974; Wackman, Ward, Wartella and Ettema, 1973) and dispositional and environmental mediating factors (Chaffee and McLeod, 1972; Greenberg, 1972; Klapper, 1960; McLeod, Atkin and Chaffee, 1972). Observations of TV families may lead to immediate or longer term attitude formation and change in a variety of areas. Television family models can be hypothesized to orient the child to observe and respond to:

1. The predominance of certain types of family structures;
2. The power associated with particular family roles;
3. Feelings of security concerning family stability;
4. Feelings of satisfaction with present family structure and interaction patterns in comparison to those observed;
5. The relative predominance of conflict-producing and maintaining and cohesion-building patterns of family interaction;
6. The degree to which conflict-producing or cohesion-maintaining behaviors are localized in particular role-role configurations;
7. Expectations concerning parent and sibling behaviors;

8. Expectations concerning changes in own role behaviors and role interaction patterns as the child matures;

9. Value and belief patterns which might affect the child's attitude toward the utility and value of marrying and having children;

10. Interaction patterns and structural relationships of families of differing racial and socio-economic backgrounds.

For any such possible impacts to occur, it is necessary to isolate and identify the predominant television themes and portrayals of family members and their interactions. Many television series are centered in a family context, e.g., "All in the Family," "Good Times," and "Maude." Many of these same shows draw large audiences of young people and constitute a significant portion of a child's television diet.

Furthermore, the act of spending time with television has effects on participation in other in-home or family activities. The typical American child spends nearly one-fourth of his/her waking hours with television programs, and often television serves as a surrogate babysitter. Inasmuch as television affects family activities, it is surprising that prior research effort has not studied the effects of television content on the child's perceptions of family structure, family roles, etc. The learning potential about families pervades much of television. Yet, this particular aspect has gone without study. A systematic content analysis of television family role structure and interaction patterns constitutes a necessary first step in the process of determining the potential and actual effects of such program content.

This report describes the results of a content analysis of family role structures and family role interaction patterns of U.S. television families. The families appeared during prime-time evening and Saturday morning shows during the 1975-76 television season. This content analysis was performed within the context of a larger study and as a necessary precursor to subsequent parts of that study. The overall project attempts to do the following:

(1) systematically and quantitatively describe critical dimensions of television programming; (2) relate available and persistent program content to child viewing patterns, parental TV guidance practices, direct experience, and motivation factors of the child; and (3) analyze and describe what attitudes and behaviors children learn from television and how relevant mediating factors affect the learning process.

Prior content analyses of television programs have dealt extensively with pro- and anti-social behaviors (Greenberg, et.al., 1977) and with role portrayals of women (Busby, 1975). One study dealt with analyses of pro- and anti-social behaviors portrayed on a selected group of family dramas and situation comedies (Wackman, Collins, Wartella; 1976). In this study, shows were divided into positive-father and negative-father types. In terms of behavioral frequency, the father was the dominant character in the shows coded, and all shows contained more pro-social behaviors than anti-social. Positive-father shows were more heavily pro-social than were negative-father shows. Fifty-four percent of all coded behaviors fell into the following three categories: (1) helping behaviors; (2) explanation of feelings, intentions, and actions; and (3) verbal aggression.

Despite a growing interest in family contextual variables, no content analysis which systematically and comprehensively describes television family interaction has been identified.

The family has also been approached from a systems perspective (Jackson, 1968; Reiss, 1971a, 1971b; Watzlavick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967; Watzlavick, Weakland and Fisch, 1974; Wertheim, 1975). The analysis of communication is central to this approach. Unfortunately, most empirical work has been conducted within a clinical framework and has utilized families with at least one diagnosed patient member.

Exploratory work on communication patterns in normal, whole families is

being conducted, but is presently incomplete (Borke, 1967; Riskin, 1976). Borke developed a scheme for the functional description of verbal interactions from the observation of normal families. Riskin's project is presently attempting to identify a viable methodology and relevant variable dimensions. Work on the development of such schemes for analysis of structural properties of family interaction has typically dealt with only husband-wife dyads or parent-child triads (Mischler, and Waxler, 1975; Rogers and Farace, 1975; Wackman and Miller, 1975).

In sum, no comprehensive theory of family interaction exists. The field is characterized by a multiplicity of conceptual approaches. For the most part, a wide gap exists between theoretical work and the empirical study of families. Much of the empirical work focuses on subsets of the family and typically involve a clinically diagnosed individual. There is little agreement on analytic schemes or analysis units for the description of family interactions.

To develop an appropriate scheme, the literature on family theory was examined. The family has been approached using a multiplicity of conceptual frameworks (Bochner, 1975). Hill and Hansen (1960) identify 5 major conceptual approaches which have been used: (1) institutional; (2) structural-functional; (3) symbolic-interactionist; (4) situational; and (5) developmental. Attempts to apply constructs from game theory (Bernard, 1964; Bodin, 1966; Ravich, Deutsch and Brown, 1966) and from exchange theory (Edwards, 1969; Richer, 1968) have also been made. A considerable portion of the literature is devoted to the study of subsets of the family, such as the marital dyad or the parent-child triad, or to limited aspects of family life such as mate selection.

Methods

The present analytic scheme is a modification of one developed by Borke (1967) for the systematic description of normal family interaction in ordinary

settings. She observed functioning families, consisting of parents and children, performing a variety of family tasks in their homes. Verbal interactions were categorized according to their functional aspects from the speaker's point of view, and these categories were then reduced to a smaller number of primary and secondary modes of interaction. These were then subsumed under Horney's (1945) three classifications of interpersonal direction: going toward someone, going against someone and going away. Borke's classifactory scheme is outlined below:

Direction	Mode	Behaviors
Goes toward	Contributes	offers information seeks information entertains
	Supports	actively promotes cause shows concern
	Petitions	seeks support seeks attention seeks direct gratification
	Directs	organizes behaves strategically instructs
	Accepts from others	accepts support accepts other's point of view
Goes against	Resists	ignores opposes
	Attacks	behaves provocatively attacks directly
Goes away	Retreats	evades withdraws physically

Borke reported the following inter-rater reliability estimates: direction, r=.89; mode, r=.60 to .70. The scheme was later adapted by Borke for use with videotapes of family interactions. Inter-rater reliability estimates across three coders was .75 for the direction and mode categories.

The present content analysis constitutes a role-by-behavior description of verbal interaction among members of television families. The coding unit was any act or sequence of acts initiated by a family member and directed to another family member which is unitary with respect to direction, mode and recipient. A coding unit could then consist of a single utterance or several comments or sentences. Whenever the initiator, recipient, direction or mode changed, a new unit was coded. If any act was directed to several recipients, a separate act was coded for each recipient. Each act was assigned to one of several nominal level categories along each of the dimensions to be described in detail below.

The Act Initiator

The name and family role of the character initiating an act was recorded. Family role was defined as the role which the act initiator held with respect to the family member toward whom the act was directed. For example, if a woman directed an act toward her husband, her role was recorded as wife. Coders were provided with a list of 40 family roles. The role list included all conceivable family roles which might occur in an extended family, ranging from the traditional nuclear roles to include such roles as guardian, godparent, and step-child.

Directions and Modes

Acts were coded into one of three directions: going toward, going away or going against. Within each directional category, a series of modes was used to more precisely describe the manner in which characters were approaching, avoiding, or attacking. Both the modes and directions were adapted from Borke's basic scheme. Several of her model categories were not used or were combined with others. After pre-testing the content analytic scheme, further refinements

in operational definitions and categories were made. The categories which remained were expected to describe fully the quantity and quality of interactions among family members on commercial television programs.

Definitions of the three directions and their accompanying modes are:

A. Goes Towards: Positive acts which initiate, maintain and/or build a family relationship. Operationally, nine modes were used:

1. Offering information -- giving information or opinion in answer to a question, or spontaneously.
2. Seeking information -- questions asked solely for the purpose of obtaining information.
3. Contributing and entertaining -- miscellaneous behaviors intended solely to take part in or further on-going interaction, including greetings exchanged as new characters enter interaction, non-hostile teasing and joking around.
4. Supporting -- doing something to benefit another, showing approval for another, encouraging, protecting, pacifying, indulging, assisting or helping another, supporting another's interests, attempting to reduce another's physical or emotional discomfort or pain.
5. Showing concern -- behaviors which demonstrate concern for another's welfare or interests but which do not actively provide support for another.
6. Petitioning -- attempts to obtain support, attention or sources or gratification from another, actions which seek to obtain help, comfort, approval, encouragement, consolation, attention or special favors for self.
7. Directing -- this includes positive attempts to manage or guide the behavior of another. Directing behavior includes giving instructions as to what to do, or how to do something, organizing family members in order to accomplish a task, directing plans, encouraging others to cooperate or behave harmoniously.

8. Accepting support -- this includes communicating to another recognition of their attempts to provide support, accepting support, showing gratitude and appreciation and accepting apologies from another.
9. Accepting direction -- this includes obeying, cooperating or complying with another person's attempt to direct or manage one's behavior. This also includes accepting another's point of view and offering an apology in response to a request or demand that apology be given.

B. Goes Against: This is conflict-producing and conflict-maintaining behavior. Operationally, three modes were defined:

1. Ignoring -- this includes disregarding another, refusing to take notice of another, reacting coldly, or with obvious and/or persistent disinterest.
2. Opposing -- this includes protesting, disagreeing, refusing to accept direction or support, refusing to cooperate, disobeying, and justifying self and/or actions in a hostile manner.
3. Attacking -- this includes initiating conflict with another, criticizing, belittling, challenging, provoking, teasing maliciously and arguing.

C. Going Away From: These are behaviors which psychologically distance one family member from another and/or behaviors by means of which one family member physically withdraws from another. Operationally, two modes were used:

1. Evading -- to avoid dealing with another, to give evasive answers, to attempt to change topic or focus of interaction in order to evade issues or questions raised.
2. Withdrawing -- to terminate interaction or stop participating in interaction by physically leaving. This does not include natural termination of interaction such as when one party must leave to fulfill recognized and valid external obligations.

The scheme developed met several criteria for the six dimensions suggested in a literature review of interactions in dyads and small groups by Rogers and Farace (1975): There were sufficient categories to adequately describe the range of interactions occurring in the typical family, yet not so many that reliable coding and coherent interpretation would be problematic; clear operational definitions of categories were specified, requiring minimal inference by coders; the scheme was applicable to normal family interaction; it focused on role relevant and functional aspects of verbal interactions; it focused on message sender's intent in terms of role-relevant normative behaviors; and there was flexibility in analysis potential allowing both cross-sectional role-role and role by interaction comparisons, as well as overtime analysis.

The Act Recipient

Recipient character name and family role were recorded in the same manner as were initiator character name and family role. Recipient family role was determined by the relationship between the act receiver and act initiator.

Family Structure Analysis

Television families come in a variety of sizes and structures. Certain key descriptors of family structure were also coded throughout the analysis. It was anticipated that a child might well be learning expectations about family size and composition from his/her television experiences.

Each family was described in terms of:

1. Size -- sum of blood and marriage-related individuals
2. Number of children, and their age and sex distributions
3. The patterns of family extendedness, i.e.,

    a. childless: husband and wife only
    b. traditional nuclear: husband, wife and child(ren)
    c. extended: husband, wife, child(ren), and other relatives(s)
    d. broken: one parent and child(ren)
    e. broken-extended: one parent, child(ren), and other relative(s)
    f. other combinations.

4. The nature of parenthood in the family, i.e.,

   a. two original parents
   b. single parent (mother or father)
   c. two parents, but only one an original parent
   d. no parents.

5. The marital status of the adult members of the family, i.e.,

   a. never married
   b. first marriage
   c. divorced and not remarried
   d. divorced and remarried
   e. widowed and not remarried
   f. widowed and remarried.

In addition, a role-role matrix was created for all members of each family to identify the full family network for each grouping.

Coder Training Procedures

Coders were undergraduates in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences at Michigan State University. Four coders were trained in two-person teams. Coders were familiarized with the coding scheme and provided with a training manual. Coders then worked with a training tape and several practice tapes. Coders practiced approximately ten hours. Three shows were coded by each team and inter-rater reliabilities were calculated. Coders then coded shows individually. Several weeks into the coding a re-check was made on inter-rater reliability. Reliabilities were still acceptably high and coders continued coding shows individually.

Reliabilities

Inter-rater reliability estimates were obtained across two coders for seven shows and across four coders for one show. Inter-rater reliability refers to the percentage agreement in categorization of acts along each of the descriptive dimensions. Average inter-rater reliability estimates for each dimension were:

Initiator character role: 95%

Act direction: 92%

Act mode: 88%

Recipient family role: 95%

Age/sex code: 95%

Sample

One episode of each prime-time evening and Saturday morning fictional television series aired by the three major networks during 1975-76 was videotape recorded. All videotapes were viewed and all shows containing verbal interactions among family members were included in our analysis. The final data consist of one episode each of 96 shows. A list of shows is in Appendix A, together with the sum of all acts derived for each show. These ranged from 405 acts in "Good Times" to 14 in "Hawaii Five-O."

Results

What then are the attributes and interaction behaviors of the fictional television family? The results of the content analyses focus on that question.

First, slightly more than one-half of the 96 shows analyzed from the composite week of prime-time and Saturday morning television contained a 'family.' Here, any two people portrayed as blood or marital kin qualified for the family role analysis, as did those with legal ties, e.g. guardians. So, in the 53 shows with some family members, 73 families were represented encompassing 208 television characters. Of these characters, 79 were children of some other character; 52 of the 79 were under 18 years of age.

Although half the shows had some type of family unit in them, the vast bulk of fictional television characters have no relatives on the programs. This sub-set of 208 characters was obtained from a pool of 1212 speaking characters. Therefore, for each character with one or more relatives, there were

five for whom relatives played no part at all in the program.

There are three basic types of television families and each occurred with similar regularity. (1) The nuclear family, two parents with one or more children was identified 28 times. (2) In 19 instances, families consisted of one parent, plus children. (3) In 17 situations, a husband and wife without children constituted the family. The remaining family types were a miscellaneous collection of two cousins, an uncle and his niece, etc. Only one other variant is worth noting. In seven of the two parent plus children families, other relatives were part of the daily household.

Among the adults in these families, divorce was not found with any frequency. Thirty-four of the adults had never been married, 95 were in their first marriage, and eight were divorced. In addition, most of the 19 single parent families were headed by widows or widowers.

Also interesting in these television family descriptors is the sex distribution among family members. Across all of television fiction, there were about three males to each female (Simmons, et.al., 1977). Yet, in these families, the proportion of males to females was 55:45, or much more equivalent. This means then, that in shows without family representation, males out-numbered females five and six to one.

Family Roles. The original set of family roles included 40 different possibilities, ranging from former spouses to foster children. However, the actual occurrences of family roles were confined predominantly to nuclear roles -- husband-wife, father-mother, son-daughter, and brother-sister. The male half of this reduced set comprised 76% of all observed male family roles, and the female half accounted for 77% of all observed female family roles. No other single role category accounted for as much as 10% of the portrayed family roles. Table 1 presents the frequency of each family role obtained.

Table 1

Family Roles Distribution

	Male Roles	Frequency		Female Roles	Frequency
1.	Husband	45	1.	Wife	45
2.	Father	33	2.	Mother	29
3.	Son	37	3.	Daughter	29
4.	Brother	32	4.	Sister	25
5.	Father-in-law	6	5.	Mother-in-law	6
6.	Son-in-law	4	6.	Daughter-in-law	5
7.	Brother-in-law	10	7.	Sister-in-law	5
8.	Uncle	5	8.	Aunt	5
9.	Nephew	8	9.	Niece	3
10.	Cousin		10.	Cousin	2
11.	All others	14	11.	All others	13

Initiators and Receivers of Family Role Interactions. Before we turn to the actual content of the family role interaction analysis, the participation of family members as initiators and receivers of interactions was examined. In all, more than 5,700 acts were identified and coded. Nuclear family males were the initiators of 50% of all family acts and nuclear family females accounted for 36% of the all initiated family acts. So, these eight roles were sufficient to describe the initiators of the vast majority of the acts studied. As for receivers of these same acts, the four male roles in the nuclear family received 48% of all acts, and the females in the same sub-set of family roles received 37%. In total, the men and women in the nuclear family roles accounted for more than 85% of all interactions and did so in the same manner in both initiator and receiver roles. Tables 2 and 3 contain the basic data describing act recipients and initiators.

However, there was considerably different emphasis on the roles featured in the nuclear sub-set for men and women. Among men, three nuclear roles were equally predominant: husband, father and son. The role of brother was markedly lower in number of interactions, whether as initiator or receiver. In contrast, one female role stood out as the initiator or recipient of interactions, and that was the wife. This role alone accounted for 12% of all acts initiated and 13% of all acts received. Sister was the second most active female family role, followed closely by mother and daughter.

It would seem that three male family roles predominate in family interaction, whereas only one female role participates to a significant degree. The other roles are relatively less active.

There were some noticeable distinctions among other characters listed in Tables 2 and 3. However, the number of characters from whom these acts were obtained was too small to warrant definitive statements. For example, nieces

Table 2

Initiators of Family Role Acts

	Males	f	(%)	Females	f	(%)
1.	Husband	723	(13)	Wife	666	(12)
2.	Father	792	(14)	Mother	460	(8)
3.	Son	725	(13)	Daughter	393	(7)
4.	Brother	571	(10)	Sister	235	(9)
5.	Father-in-law	74	(1)	Mother-in-law	37	(1)
6.	Son-in-law	47	(1)	Daughter-in-law	55	(1)
7.	Brother-in-law	82	(1)	Sister-in-law	98	(2)
8.	Uncle	56	(1)	Aunt	63	(1)
9.	Nephew	88	(2)	Niece	7	(0)
10.	Cousin	29	(.5)	Cousin	108	(2)
11.	(Grandfather; Step-father, Foster-father, Step-son, Foster-son, Grandson, Step-brother, Ex-spouse, God-father, Guardian)	60	(1)	(Grandmother: Step-sister, God-mother, Female guardian, Step-mother, Foster-mother, Grandmother, granddaughter, stepdaughter, ex-spouse)	63	(1)
		n=	3247		n=	2485

Table 3

Receivers of Family Role Acts

	Males	f	(%)	Females	f	(%)
1.	Husband	661	(12)	Wife	728	(13)
2.	Father	699	(12)	Mother	410	(7)
3.	Son	779	(14)	Daughter	465	(8)
4.	Brother	578	(10)	Sister	528	(9)
5.	Father-in-law	55	(1)	Mother-in-law	47	(1)
6.	Son-in-law	56	(1)	Daughter-in-law	56	(1)
7.	Brother-in-law	92	(2)	Sister-in-law	87	(2)
8.	Uncle	39	(1)	Aunt	57	(1)
9.	Nephew	98	(2)	Niece	17	(<1)
10.	Cousin	29	(.5)	Cousin	108	(2)
11.	Others	52	(1)	Others	64	(1)
		n=	3138		n=	2567

are almost empty cells in terms of behaviors, whereas nephews seem more active; but there were only three nieces and eight nephews appearing in the sample. Similarly, the differences between male and female cousins originate with one of the former and two of the latter.

A final analysis of the nuclear family interactions, without concern yet for the content of the interactions, paired the family members in their initiating and receiving roles. Table 4 presents this analysis.

Husbands and wives were the primary interactors, splitting 29% of all interactions in the nuclear family as receivers and initiators. The second largest set of behaviors occurred between fathers and sons (21%). This was twice the frequency of interaction as between mothers and daughters (9%), mothers and sons (9%), or fathers and daughters (9%). In addition, brothers and sisters interacted with opposite sex siblings at higher rates (14%) than the above mentioned three parent-child combinations, while interacting with same sex siblings at much lower rates (9%).

As a summary of descriptive information about TV families, there are three basic types of television fictional families: a husband and wife without children, two parents with one or more children, and a sole parent with children. Males and females are present in these families to a nearly equivalent extent and the proportion of family interaction they initiate and receive is equivalent to their sex's representation in the TV family population. In these families, men are husbands, fathers and sons; women appear more often in the role of wife than in any other family role. The most frequently occurring role-role pair is the husband-wife dyad. Fathers with their sons, and brothers with their sisters constitute the next most frequently occurring interactive pairs.

Direction and Mode of Family Role Interactions. Table 5 presents the overall distribution of interactions by direction and mode. One direction --

Table 4

Nuclear Family Interacts

Initiator	Recipient	# of Acts	% of Acts	Acts Per Initiator
Husband	Wife	723	15%	16.1
Wife	Husband	666	14	14.8
Mother	Son	223	5	7.7
Son	Mother	215	4	5.8
Mother	Daughter	233	5	8.0
Daughter	Mother	195	4	6.7
Father	Son	556	11	16.8
Son	Father	503	10	13.6
Father	Daughter	229	5	6.9
Daughter	Father	192	4	6.6
Brother	Brother	234	5	7.3
Brother	Sister	336	7	10.5
Sister	Brother	344	7	13.8
Sister	Sister	191	4	7.6
		4840	100%	

Table 5

Direction and Mode of Family Role Interactions

Direction	Mode	f	(%)
Goes Against	1. Ignores	8	(<1)
	2. Opposes	403	(7)
	3. Attacks	193	(3)
Goes Away	1. Evades	36	(1)
	2. Withdraws	9	(<1)
Goes Toward	1. Offers Information	2012	(35)
	2. Seeks Information	837	(15)
	3. Contributes	480	(8)
	4. Supports	376	(7)
	5. Shows Concern	84	(2)
	6. Petitions	301	(5)
	7. Directs	790	(14)
	8. Accepts Support	60	(1)
	9. Accepts Direction	144	(3)
		5733	100%

going away did not occur in either the mode of evasion or withdrawal from the interactive situation. A second direction -- going against someone -- accounted for just under 11% of all family role interactions. The most frequently occurring mode of going away was verbal opposition (7%). Direct verbal attacks occurred less frequently (3%). The act of ignoring occurred less than 1% of the time.

The most frequently observed direction of family role interactions was going toward, or approaching the other person in a positive, constructive fashion. Table 5 identifies offering information as the mode most often observed in television family interactions, accounting for 35% of all such behaviors. Two other modes also occurred with high frequency -- those of seeking information and directing others to something. It is interesting in itself that more than half of the offers of information were not preceded by requests for such information. Three other modes of going toward others generated high behavior counts. These were contributing behaviors, which serve largely to continue the conversation, supportive or reinforcing behaviors, and petitioning behaviors, which are the complement of supportive behaviors. Three of the behaviors associated with this direction of interaction did not occur frequently. These were acts of showing concern for other, accepting support from others, and accepting directions from others.

From the original scheme of family role interactions, it is apparent that acts of evasion and withdrawal were not observed with sufficient frequency to warrant further analysis. Acts of going against were primarily observed as acts of opposition and, secondarily, as verbal attacks. These two modes were retained for further analyses. The distinction among modes of going toward was also maintained to facilitate description of differential use of these

family interaction modes.

In Table 4, we presented the total frequency with which different role-role pairs of the nuclear family (e.g., father-mother), engaged in family interactions. For comparison, Table 6 takes the same role pairs and presents the proportion of all acts by these pairs which were acts of going toward. The complement to these proportions were acts of going against.

All pairs predominantly engage in acts of going toward. However, there appear some interesting conflicts in these television families. For one, mothers are more affiliative toward their sons and daughters (94%) than the sons and daughters are toward mothers (87%). The father-child pairs do not show the same discrepancy.

Sister-brother and brother-brother relationships are more often in conflict (15%) than sister-sister relationships (4%). Table 6 also indicates that husbands and wives provide a disproportionate share of going against or conflictual interaction.

The remaining analyses examine the extent to which different family role participants, by sex category or by age category, exhibit these act types in discriminable patterns. Such a description should facilitate subsequent research attempts to determine social learning by young viewers from television's portrayals of families and their interactions.

Table 7 presents each nuclear family role and the degree to which that role consists of the behaviors of going against and going toward. The following are conclusions from that table:

1. For all family role members, offering of information was the most frequently observed behavior. For some, the seeking of information was the second most frequent behavior (wife, son, daughter, brother, sister); for others it was giving directions to other (husband, father, mother).

Table 6

Acts of Going Toward Others
By Nuclear Family Role Interactors

Initiator	Recipient	% of Acts Going Toward
Husband	Wife	86%
Wife	Husband	88
Mother	Son	93
Son	Mother	87
Mother	Daughter	95
Daughter	Mother	88
Father	Son	91
Son	Father	90
Father	Daughter	95
Daughter	Father	93
Brother	Brother	84
Brother	Sister	85
Sister	Brother	85
Sister	Sister	96

Table 7

Direction and Mode of Family Role Interactors
By Family Role Initiators

Direction	Mode	Husband	Wife	Mother	Father	Son	Dtr.	Bro.	Sis.
Goes Against	1. Opposes	10%	8%	4%	6%	8%	7%	10%	7%
	2. Attacks	3	4	2	2	2	3	6	3
Goes Toward	1. Offers Information	36	36	31	31	34	35	34	40
	2. Seeks Information	11	14	13	17	13	15	16	15
	3. Contributes	9	7	8	10	11	7	7	6
	4. Supports	6	7	9	8	4	7	5	5
	5. Petitions	4	5	3	2	8	11	4	6
	6. Directs	16	11	24	19	8	10	13	14

2. TV Mothers engaged in least opposing behaviors. They did least disagreeing or protesting of any role.
3. Mothers were most likely to give instructions on what to do or how to do it. They were the family directors more so than anyone else. Fathers also did more of this than others, but less so than mothers. Children did the least, along with wives.
4. Sons and daughters did the most seeking of help or support. This petitioning was aimed at parents, who themselves did the least of this mode of behavior.

Table 8 provides a parallel analysis of the family role interaction behaviors, by the age of the family role members. Three age groupings were used: pre-teens, teens, and post-teens. From that analysis, these findings appear to be of most interest:

1. Teen-agers initiated more opposing conflictual interactions than any other age grouping; post-teens were most often the objects of these interactions; and pre-teens were least often the receivers.
2. Curiously, pre-teens engaged in more offering information than any other age group.
3. Teen-agers did less seeking of information and more contributing (greeting others, joking) than did the other age groups.
4. Post-teens did the most giving of directions and directed their efforts equally at pre-teens and teens. They received the least direction.

A similar analysis of family role interactions by the sex of the family role member did not yield any discriminable patterns.

Thus far, presentation of results for the family role interaction modes has described the extent to which role holders exhibit behaviors. This

Table 8

Direction and Mode of Family Role Interactors by Age

		Initiator			Recipient		
		Pre-teen	Teen	Post-teen	Pre-teen	Teen	Post-teen
Direction	Mode						
Goes Against	1. Opposes	6	10	7	3	6	8
	2. Attacks	3	4	3	3	4	3
Goes Toward	1. Offers Information	42	33	34	41	29	36
	2. Seeks Information	14	10	15	17	12	15
	3. Contributes	6	11	8	4	10	8
	4. Supports	3	5	7	7	8	6
	5. Petitions	10	9	4	2	3	6
	6. Directs	10	9	16	20	21	12
	Acts:	348	914	3585	408	933	3446

description focuses on the individual role as the unit of analysis. An alternative examination focuses on the dyadic family role relationships. Here we examine the frequency of behaviors for each role-role pair (e.g., husband-wife). A certain portion of this is extractable from Table 7 and the full table of results is in Appendix B. The data permit the following conclusions:

Direction: Going Against

1. Opposing behaviors were observed most frequently in the husband-wife dyad, with husbands opposing wives somewhat more than wives opposing husbands. Other major dyads frequently engaged in opposing behaviors were father-son, and sister-brother.

Direction: Going Toward

1. Husbands were more likely to direct their wives; wives were more likely to seek support from husbands.
2. Sons sought support from the father, and fathers gave support to sons; fathers gave direction to sons more often than the reverse was true.
3. Fathers sought information from sons, more so than sons did from fathers.

The final table in this analysis brings together age pairings of initiators and receivers. Table 9 combines all pairings involving a pre-teen, because of their relative infrequency, but maintains distinctions among teen-to-teen, teen-to-post and post-teen to post-teen comparisons. As indicated earlier, most acts occurred among post-teenagers. The cross-generation interactions are of more than passing interest, however. Ignoring the far right column in the table (which repeats the pre-eminence of post-post comparisons), it can be seen that:

Table 9

Direction and Mode of Family Role Interacts
Among Family Role Pairs by Age

Initiator / Receiver			All Pre-Pairs	Teen Teen	Teen Post	Post Teen	Post Post
Direction	Mode						
Goes Against	1.	Opposes	8%	8%	13%	7%	65%
	2.	Attacks	9	11	6	9	65
Goes Toward	1.	Offers Information	14	6	9	8	63
	2.	Seeks Information	14	4	6	10	66
	3.	Contributes	6	7	15	16	56
	4.	Supports	9	5	6	17	63
	5.	Petitions	13	5	22	5	55
	6.	Directs	14	5	3	21	57

1. A family dyad which involved a pre-teenager did more seeking and offering of information.
2. The offering of support was predominantly from a post-teen to a teenager; the seeking of support was primarily from the teenager to the post-teen.
3. Directions were most frequently given to pre-teens and to teens by post-teens.

Summary of Family Role Interactions Findings

The predominant interaction pattern among television families was affiliative, or one of going toward another family member. Fully 90% of observed behaviors fall within this category. Acts of going away occurred so rarely as to be dropped from future replications of this study. Although acts of going against occurred with considerably lower frequency, the distinction between opposing and attacking are retained, since these model categories constituted 18% of all family role interactions.

The primary mode of interactive affiliation was that of offering information. Other prime modes were seeking information, giving directions to others to execute, and seeking and offering support.

Certain role-role behavioral patterns were conspicuous. Conflict, when it did occur, was typically in husband-wife interactions and sibling relationships, except sister-sister. It was also more frequent from child to mother than from mother to child, for both sexes of children. This pattern was not observed for father-child relationships.

TV mothers exhibited the least going against behaviors. Typically they gave more directions than any other family role holder. Fully one-fourth of their behaviors consisted of telling others what to do and/or how to do it. Fathers were the next most frequent givers of direction.

Sons and daughters often sought help or support from parents. Fathers frequently gave support to sons, as well as directions.

Teenagers appeared to generate more conflict than other age groups, and they sought information least. They did seek support, however, and typically received it from post-teens. They also received most directions from post-teens.

In sheer amount of activity, husband-wife and father-son dyads dominated family interactions. These two dyads accounted for 50% of all nuclear family interactions. Mother-child and father-daughter interactions were infrequent, by comparison.

Discussion

This study deals with potential learning of the role of communication in family systems. If children learn and model role relationships they observe in television family interactions, what they are learning are ways or modes of communicating with specific others in specific situations. In that sense, television portrayals of family interactions have the potential to provide information about how families should communicate. The implications of such learning are clearly more immediate than many other social role content areas. For example, if a child learns about the role of police in the cultural system, attitudes about police can be formed. But the opportunity for actual behavior or interaction with police will probably be many years in the future. In the case of family interaction, the arena for testing newly acquired attitudes and behaviors is directly and pervasively accessible.

The study has several limitations. First, the content analytic scheme did not code nonverbal interaction, which may account in part for the apparent absence of going away behaviors. Ignoring someone may be more a nonverbal behavior than a verbal one. However, it was necessary to limit the coding to

verbal behaviors so that the coding process would not become unwieldly. Further, the nature of televisio. suggests that most interactions of significance would be verbal; long silences are not common on television. Although no comprehensive studies are available which examine differential developmental levels of learning by children when there is multi-channel inconsistency (the nonverbal dimension conflicts with the verbal message), evidence does exist which suggests that young children tend to perceive the literal content when two evaluative messages conflict (Butenthal, et. al., 1970; Butenthal, 1974).

Another limit is in the non-differentiation between humorous and nonhumorous contexts for verbal interaction. Such a distinction could make a difference on shows which are verbally aggressive but meant to be funny (e.g., "All in the Family," "Maude"). Again, comprehensive statements about developmental learning can not be made, but evidence suggests that younger children tend to believe the literal message. Increasing age results in greater ability to interpret the verbal message based on context (Butenthal, et. al., 1970).

There are several implications for children's social learning of family roles from television from these results. First, there are not many child role models available. Most children observed were either teenagers or the adult children of other characters. As such, the role of the young child is vague and ambiguous. The fact that children are largely absent from television families could lead a child to question his or her own importance in the family system.

There is considerable impetus for anticipatory socialization for young children, however. Teen role models appear to joke around and oppose their parents a great deal of the time, indicative of the independence-seeking typically associated with adolescence. Given that many of these portrayals are done in a humorous light and on extremely popular shows ("Happy Days", "Good

Times", "One Day at a Time"), such portrayals could increase the tendency for identification, which theory indicates should increase imitation.

Also important to anticipatory socialization are the adult role models and parent/child models. The spouse/spouse portrayals support a stereotype common to several cultures: The husband directs the wife; the wife seeks support from the husband. As such, television portrayals may add strength to stereotypes already extant in the child's beliefs. The observed relationship incidence between mother and children and that between father and children, also conforms to certain sterotypes. In terms of numbers, male children have more role models than do female children. With regard to interaction, the mother interacts equally with both children whereas the father interacts far more with sons than with daughters.

The relative absence of relatives outside of traditional nuclear family roles is important for children's social learning about such roles. Very little information is provided about step-parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, or grandparents. Given that many children have limited direct experience with such roles, there remains a void. For example, television does not provide information about how to behave toward older people, what to expect in return, and, most important, does not provide much information about what it is like for someone to actually "grow old."

The predominance of pro-social behaviors observed in this analysis is consistent with the findings of Wackman, et. al. (1976). As such, it seems that families on television are provided predominantly positive interaction models for children, in terms of the kinds of interactions coded.

It is not possible to directly compare the data obtained from observation of televised interactions with "real world" interaction styles in typical nuclear households. First, there is a paucity of data taken from observations

of normal families in typical interaction situations. Further, aggregation of the television data provides a description of available roles and interaction modes for possible social learning; it does not attempt to identify interaction styles typical to different types of families. Finally, most empirical investigations of family interaction take a case study approach, which does not attempt to generalize across families. The two approaches are not comparable. What can be compared, however, is the relationship of televised interaction to commonly held standards and stereotypes. Television seems to support such views of family interaction.

Clearly, television families have changed and are changing. "Father Knows Best" and "Donna Reed" represent very different families than do the members of "Maude" or "The Jeffersons." Two research directions should be 1) to track the changes in the general pattern of television families; and 2) to select a sample of extremely popular shows and examine family interaction patterns over time.

Content analysis should never represent an end in itself. The purpose of this analysis, beyond the descriptive aspects presented here, is to assess social learning which may originate with these content presentations. Sheer exposure to television seemingly is too crude an estimate of potential effects; adding specific content components to measures of exposure ought yield more precise statements about the relationship between exposure and social learning. Here, the obvious next stage is to link content and exposure measures for programs viewed by groups of young people to their expectations, beliefs, aspirations, values and behaviors within their own family setting. The findings presented here were a necessary antecedent study for investigating an exposure-social learning relationship. The follow-up study examining children and their responses to these content experiences is now underway.

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APPENDIX A

# of Acts	Shows	# of Acts	Shows
(405)	Good Times	(97)	Barnaby Jones
(385)	Montefuscos	(91)	The Practice
(318)	Waltons	(89)	That's My Mama
(285)	Beacon Hill	(88)	On the Rocks
(265)	Dumplings	(83)	Bronk
(249)	Family Holvak	(78)	Phyllis
(214)	Land of the Lost	(75)	The Rookies
(213)	Rhoda	(74)	Marcus Welby
(204)	Joe and Sons	(72)	Medical Story
(194)	LHOP	(69)	Bob Newhart
(191)	Valley of Dinosaurs	(64)	Westwind
(189)	3 for the Road	(44)	Tom and Jerry
(185)	Swiss Family Robinson	(44)	Josie & the Pussy Cats
(171)	Sanford and Son	(42)	Doctor's Hospital
(165)	All in the Family	(41)	Fay
(164)	One Day at a Time	(38)	The Invisible Man
(139)	Kate McShane	(29)	Tom & Jerry/Grape Ape
(135)	Happy Days	(28)	Sara
(132)	Streets of San Francisco	(27)	Gillgan
(131)	Sigmund & Sea Monsters	(24)	Joe Forester
(116)	Ellery Queen	(23)	Welcome Back Kotter
(113)	Doc	(22)	Scooby-Doo
(108)	Mary Tyler Moore	(20)	Police Story
(104)	Maude	(17)	Fat Albert
(100)	Medical Center	(15)	Pebbles & Bam Bam
(98)	Rockford File	(14)	Hawaii Five-0
(98)	Popi		

APPENDIX B

TOTAL % OF EACH MODE

Direction: / Mode:	Against		Toward					
	Opposes	Attacks	Offers Information	Seeks Information	Contributes	Supports	Petitions	Directs
Husband-Wife*	19**	15	15	11	17	14	10	17
Wife-Husband	14	17	14	14	11	14	14	11
Father-Son	10	9	10	15	10	14	5	16
Father-Daughter	3	1	4	5	8	7	1	6
Mother-Son	2	5	3	5	5	6	2	9
Mother-Daughter	3	1	5	4	4	8	4	7
Sister-Brother	9	12	9	7	3	3	8	7
Son-Mother	6	3	4	3	8	2	10	2
Son-Father	9	9	11	11	12	8	14	7
Daughter-Mother	5	4	4	3	3	5	11	1
Daughter-Father	2	3	4	5	3	4	6	4
Brother-Brother	7	9	5	4	5	4	6	4
Sister-Sister	2	--	4	5	4	6	6	4
Brother-Sister	9	12	7	9	5	6	4	7

* The first member of each pair is the act initiator and the second is the act recipient.
** Of all opposing, "Husbands oppose Wives" accounts for 19%.